

We claim:

1. A method of providing a customer remote access to a group of editors through a central provider with the customer, provider and editors being linked by a computer network, said customers requiring modification of digital images, said method

5 comprising the steps of:

transferring from the customer to the provider the digital image along with the customer's instructions for modifying the digital image;

selecting an editor to perform the modifications;

transferring the digital image and the associated instructions to the selected editor;

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providing the customer with access to the digital image back after the modifications have been made by the editor.

15 2. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the instructions are in the form of typed text.

3. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the instructions are in the form of graphics overlaid on the digital image.

20 4. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the selection of the editor is made via a bidding process.

25 5. A method as recited in claim 4 wherein the provider selects the editor based on the bids.

6. A method as recited in claim 4 wherein the customer selects the editor based on the bids.

30 7. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the selection of the editor is made based on the editor's availability.

8. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the selection of the editor is made based on the type and complexity of the work and the skill of the editor.

5 9. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the selection of the editor is made based on an order deadline supplied by the customer.

10 10. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein selection of the editor is made by the provider notifying a plurality of editors about the requested modifications to the digital image and the price that will be paid to the editor to make those modifications and the first editor to accept the offer is selected.

11. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the provider determines the fee to be paid by the customer.

15 12. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the customer is charged a fee by the provider which is higher than the provider pays to the editor for the modifications to the digital image.

20 13. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein customer is provided with an interface including:
a region for displaying a rendering of the digital image; and
a region for inputting textual instructions

25 14. A method as recited in claim 13 wherein said interface further includes an electronic drawing tool for adding electronic marks to the rendered digital image to indicate the location and/or type of modifications to be made.

30 15. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein customer is provided with an interface which includes a list of selectable editing requests and which permits inputting of textual instructions for supplementing a selected editing request.

16. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein after the image and instructions are transferred from the customer to the provider, the provider generates a cost estimate to perform the requested modifications.

5 17. A method as recited in claim 16 wherein the cost estimate is communicated to the customer for approval.

18. A method as recited in claim 16 wherein the cost estimate is generated algorithmically.

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19. A user interface allowing a holder of a digital image to input instructions of how the image should be modified by an editor, said interface comprising:

a region for displaying a rendering of the digital image;

a region for inputting textual instructions; and

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an electronic drawing tool for adding electronic marks to the rendered digital image to indicate the location and/or type of modifications to be made.

20. An interface as recited in claim 19 further including a selection of electronic shortcuts corresponding to conventional image manipulation instructions.

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21. An interface as recited in claim 20 wherein the shortcuts are combined with additional textual instructions.

22. An interface as recited in claim 19 including an algorithm for prioritizing the instructions based on efficiency.

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23. An interface as recited in claim 19 wherein said electronic drawing tool is selected from the group consisting of a pencil, a stamp, an arrow and a boundary marker.

24. A user interface allowing a holder of a digital image to input instructions of how the image should be modified by an editor, said interface comprising:

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a region displaying a list of selectable editing requests; and
a region for inputting textual instructions for supplementing a selected editing request.

5 25. An interface as recited in claim 24 wherein at least some of the selectable editing requests are linked to more detailed editing requests so that if a particular request is selected, the user will be prompted to provide additional information.

10 26. An interface as recited in claim 24 wherein at least some of the selectable editing requests are linking to text and images which illustrate the nature of the editing request.

15 27. A user interface allowing a holder of a digital image to input instructions of how the image should be modified by an editor, said interface comprising:
a region displaying a list of selectable editing requests, each such request providing a link to an associated display page related to that editing request; and
a plurality of display pages related to the selectable editing requests, said display pages including questions related to the request and a region for inputting textual instructions for supplementing the editing requests.

20 28. An interface as recited in claim 27 wherein at least some of the selectable editing requests are linked to a separate page with text and images that illustrate the nature of the editing request.

25 29. A method of allowing a customer to obtain edits of a digital image from a remote location comprising the steps of:
transferring from a customer site to a remote provider site over a network a digital image along with instructions related to modifying the image;
at the provider site, generating a cost estimate to perform the requested
30 modifications and transmitting the estimate to the customer;

communicating an authorization from the customer to the provider to perform the modifications if the estimate is acceptable to the customer;
modifying the digital image in accordance with the instructions; and
providing the customer access to the modified image.

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30. A method as recited in claim 29 wherein the instructions are in the form of typed text.

31. A method as recited in claim 30 wherein customer is provided with an interface including:

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a region for displaying a rendering of the digital image; and
a region for inputting textual instructions.

32. A method as recited in claim 29 wherein the cost estimate is generated algorithmically.

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33. A method as recited in claim 29 wherein the provider sends back a request to the customer for additional instructions related to the image.

34. A method as recited in claim 29 wherein the customer is charged a fee by the provider for modifying the image.

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35. A method as recited in claim 29 further including the step of generating a hard copy reproduction of the modified image.

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36. A method as recited in claim 29 further including the step of permitting a third party access to the modified image.

37. A method as recited in claim 29 wherein the type of modification to the image is selected from the group consisting of:

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a) merging a new digital image with the original digital image;

- b) colorizing the image;
- c) adding motion effects to the image;
- d) changing the background in the image; and
- e) removing an object in the image.

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38. A method of allowing a customer to utilize the services of a remote editor to modify a digital image comprising the steps of:

transferring from a customer site to a remote provider site over a network a digital image along with instructions related to modifying the image;

10 at the provider site, generating a cost estimate to perform the requested modifications and transmitting the estimate to the customer;

communicating an authorization from the customer to the provider to perform the modifications if the estimate is acceptable to the customer;

15 electronically transferring the digital image and the instructions from the provider to a remote editor;

at the editor's site, modifying the digital image in accordance with the instructions; and

providing the customer access to the modified image.

20 39. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the instructions are in the form of typed text.

40. A method as recited in claim 39 wherein customer is provided with an interface including:

25 a region for displaying a rendering of the digital image; and
a region for inputting textual instructions

41. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the cost estimate is generated algorithmically.

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42. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the provider sends back a request to the customer for additional instructions related to the image.

5 43. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the customer is charged a fee by the provider for modifying the image and wherein that fee is higher than the amount which is charged by the editor to the provider for making the modification.

10 44. A method as recited in claim 38 further including the step of generating hard copy reproductions of the modified image.

45. A method as recited in claim 38 further including the step of permitting third access to the modified image.

15 46. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the selection of the editor is made via a bidding process.

47. A method as recited in claim 46 wherein the provider selects the editor based on the bids.

20 48. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the selection of the editor is made based on the editor's availability.

25 49. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the selection of the editor is made based on the type and complexity of the work and the skill of the editor.

50. A method as recited in claim 38 wherein the type of modification to the image is selected from the group consisting of:

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- a) merging a new digital image with the original digital image;
 - b) colorizing the image;
 - c) adding motion effects to the image;
 - d) changing the background in the image; and

e) removing an object in the image.

51. A method of facilitating modifications to a workpiece where the workpiece is at a location remote from the location of the manager who creates the instructions for the

5 modifying the workpiece, comprising the steps of:

creating a digital image of the workpiece;

electronically transferring the digital image of the workpiece over a network to the manager;

10 inputting into a terminal at the manager's location instructions for modifying the workpiece;

electronically transferring the instructions over a network to a terminal near where the workpiece is located; and

performing the modifications to the workpiece in accordance with the instructions.

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52. A method as recited in claim 51 wherein the instructions are linked to the image and wherein the image along with the instructions are electronically transferred back to the terminal near where the workpiece is located.

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53. A method as recited in claim 51 wherein manager is provided with an interface including:

a region for displaying a rendering of the digital image; and

a region for inputting textual instructions associated with the image.

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54. A method as recited in claim 53 where instructions are overlaid on the image.

55. A method of communicating design concepts between an editor and a manager comprising the steps of:

30 transmitting over a network a first digital image created by the editor from its location to the manager's location;

using an interface at the manager's location which displays the image, generating instructions to modify the image, said instructions being overlaid on the image; and transmitting the instructions back to the editor.

5 56. A method which allows the holder of a digital image to utilize the services of a photo-illustrator at a location remote from the holder comprising the steps of:

inputting into a terminal at the holder's location instructions related to the digital image;

transferring over a network the instructions and the digital image to a terminal at
10 the illustrator's location;

rendering a new digital image by the illustrator based on the instructions, wherein the new digital image is a separate creation visually based on the original digital image; and

providing the holder access to the new digital image after the illustrator has
15 carried out the instructions supplied by the holder.

57. A method as recited in claim 56 wherein the new digital image is a cartoon representation of the original digital image.

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